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CHAPTER 13

WASHINGTON BIBLE COLLEGE

One of the most beautiful spots in Lanham is the home of the Washington Bible College.

In July 1969, almost unnoticed, the Society of the Divine Savior (Salvatorian Fathers and Brothers) moved out of the large structure of lannon stone sitting quietly and majestically overlooking a wide expanse of wooded country, and students of the Washington Bible College moved in.

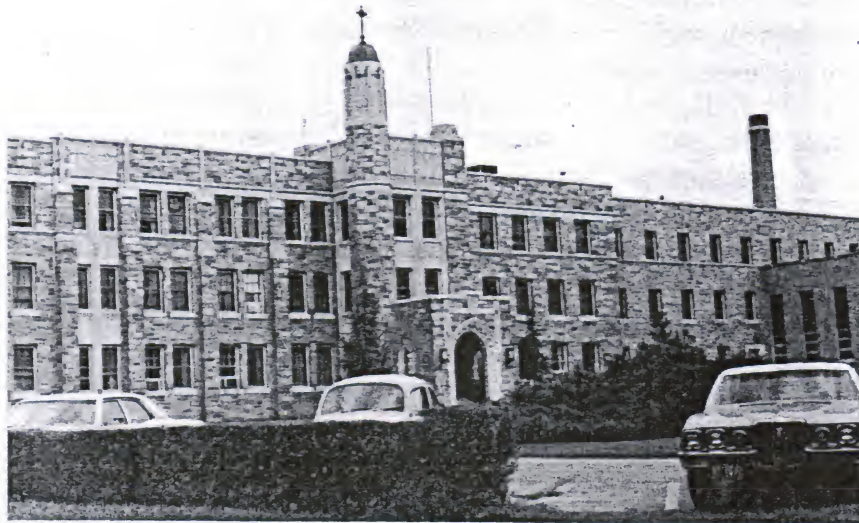
Located on a 63-acre tract at Princess Garden Parkway and Goodluck Road, the seminary was constructed and dedicated at the feast of the Immaculate Conception in 1941, at the time President Franklin D. Roosevelt was asking Congress to declare war on Japan. The building was then three stories high and able to accommodate 50 persons.

As the society continued to grow, an addition was completed in 1957, and a third wing was dedicated in 1964.

The property, sold to the Washington Bible College for \$1.2 million, includes a 11-room architectural masterpiece of lannon stone with a Romanesque tower, chapel, outdoor swimming pool and other buildings.

The history of the scholastic house of studies in Lanham began in 1935, when a large house, known as Magnolia Springs, was purchased. (One of three spring-houses still stands on the seminary property. Water from the three springs, believed to contain sulphur, was bottled and shipped around the country for medicinal purposes.)

The following year it became the Salvatorian School of Philosophy.



Plans were soon formulated for the erection of an adequate, permanent scholasticate. Construction of the building commenced in autumn, 1940.

For two years, prior to the time of sale to the Bible College the fate of the seminary was undetermined due to a financial crisis resulting from unprofitable investments in a Washington-based real estate company. Losses caused the Seminar-ians to close three locations - one of them being the Divine Savior Seminary in Lanham. Also at the time of the sale, the society also sold two acres of land on Good-luck Road to the West Lanham Hills Fire Department.

Sale of the local property had been delayed by an intensive fund raising campaign by Catholics and other friends of the seminary in the Lanham area. The group raised \$50,000 under the name of "Save Our Seminary (SOS)" and encouraged the North American Province to change its mind about selling. The American Provincial Superior wrote that the Provinciate had withdrawn its decision to close the seminary, but later reversed its decision.

The Very Reverend Hillary Kouba, SOS, Superior of Lanham's Divine Savior Seminary, said the reversal resulted partly from a change in educational policy. Previously, upon completion of the novitiate year and profession of the first vows,

a young Salvatorian spent six years as a scholastic and devoted two years to philosophy and four to theology, studying in one place. Father Kouba said it is now felt that seminarians would become better trained by staying only three years. Thus a theologate as large as the Lanham Seminary would not be needed.

Dr. George M. Miles, president of the Washington Bible College felt the purchase of the seminary was a tremendous answer to prayer, for he said they didn't know what they were going to do or where they were going to go.

Washington Bible College had been located for many years at 1441 Rhode Island Avenue, N. W. in Washington. It is an Evangelical degree-granting, coeducational school. Enrollment in the school at present varies with the different programs.

Enrollment today includes 303 students in the day college program, 509 in the night college program, 131 correspondent students, 481 extension school students and 38 students in the seminary. Two hundred students live in the dormitories on the campus.

The story of the seminary property is etched into history - reaching back almost to the days of the Ark and Dove, which in the spring of 1634, brought the first settlers to our shores. Princess Gardens Parkway gets its name from the estate on which the Washington Bible College now stands.

In 1844, the original estate, consisting of two sections, "Bacon Hall", and "Part of Quebec" became the property of Lucy Beall and was designated as Beall's Farm. It is surmised, though with some uncertainty, the first recorded mistress of the estate was a relative of Thomas Beall, who laid out the city of Washington, D.C. and was a close friend and collaborator of George Washington. Whatever prosperity the farm enjoyed in its early years was of short duration.

During the remaining fifty years of the 19th century, the estate was tossed from owner to owner, losing portions of its land to each transaction as well as some of the prestige it had enjoyed previously. By 1868 it had shrunk to 400 acres. Only 280 acres remained when in 1903 Baker E. Evans, its twelfth possessor, subscribed his name to the deed, entitled it Princess Gardens, by which name it has since been known. The estate gained an appreciable reputation through Mr. Evans' exquisite herd of horses and the water of "Magnolia Springs" which still flows at the foot of the hill on which the villa stands. In 1907 Mr. Evans relinquished the property to Mr. Steele and again the papers of the estate were passed to six successive owners, and in 1919 came into the hands of Dr. Franz Colin, then professor of theology at Catholic University. Until 1935, Dr. Colin resided at the villa though the land suffered from lack of culture. It was in the same year of 1935 that the Salvatorian Fathers heard of Dr. Colin's intentions to sell the property and so contacted him to discuss the possible purchase as a summer home for the students of the Society. The interview resulted in their purchase of Princess Gardens.

In September 1969, the new Washington Bible College was dedicated.

Over 1,000 guests, parents and friends of the 261 students of the college were seated on the lawn in the bright sunlight and during the ceremony they heard the founders of the WBC define the purpose of the school as instruction in the Bible, granting appropriate diplomas or degrees for completion of prescribed courses. The "First emphasis" according to the By-Laws, would be upon Bible Courses, applied subjects to be taught only as they are helpful in producing a more effective witness and useful ministry of the students."

President of the college, Dr. George A. Miles, is a graduate of Albion College and the engineering school of the University of Michigan. He was appointed full time president of the Washington Bible Institute in 1945. Prior to that time, Miles served as president of the American Home Bible Institute from 1938 to 1940 on a part-time basis, and served as a trustee and instructor under the administration of Reverend Glenn W. Wagner. In March 1970, Miles completed 25 years of ministry at WBC.

During the dedication Reverend Wagner said, "The nation needs this Lanham campus, we need it and God needs it. Each student here is a potential missionary. The seed is the word of God - and without the seed, there will be no crop." Continuing he said, "The greatest need in the world is to go to those who have yet to hear and this is why we have this college."

In 1940, Reverend Wagner became the first full-time president of the Washington Bible Institute. He led many young people in the Washington area into the systematic study of the Word of God and laid the foundation for future growth and development of the college program. He resigned in 1944 to reach U. S. servicemen with the word of God, serving under the Pocket Testament League.

Reverend Wagner has spearheaded the free distribution of the word of God, first in China, then Japan, Formosa, Africa, Europe, South America, Vietnam and now in Southeast Asia as Foreign Secretary. Recalling a talk he had in Japan with General Douglas A. MacArthur at the close of World War II General MacArthur at that time called for 3,000 missionaries. MacArthur challenged the world leaders and when he couldn't get the missionaries the general asked for the Bible. To date, over 10 million Bibles have been printed in the Japanese language.

Plans of the near future will include ground breaking for a new dormitory building and long range plans call for faculty and staff housing and then hopefully a high school will be built.